

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Southern Store Fixtures Inc

Alabama Technology Network

Food Merchandiser Gets Leaner with Help from ATN

Client Profile:

Southern Store Fixtures (SSF) is a premier supplier of hot and cold store fixtures for some of the largest grocery store chains in the United States. The company employs approximately 140 workers and is located in Bessemer, Alabama.

Situation:

SSF's strategy to become a premier supplier of specialty refrigerated food merchandisers was to begin a Lean business journey at their Bessemer, Alabama, manufacturing facility. The process of the Lean business journey is to identify and eliminate non-value added activities, namely waste. SSF engaged the Alabama Technology Network (ATN), a NIST MEP network affiliate, during the early part of 2004 to be the change and knowledge transfer agents for their Lean business journey.

Solution:

ATN provided SSF with several training and education services. First, they educated the entire workforce on what Lean manufacturing is and what it means to a company. Then, they chose a handful of employees whose job responsibilities would allow them to not only identify opportunities for change but to also implement them. These employees learned more about Lean manufacturing through the Lean Certificate Series, which includes such topics as: Value Stream Mapping, Quick Changeover, Kaizen events, Leading Lean, Cellular/Flow and Total Productive Maintenance. Once this training was completed, several Value Stream Mapping events took place with small groups of 6 to 10 employees. This training allowed employees to map the flow of information and products. Mapping is a great visual tool in helping employees identify where waste exists and can be eliminated in the information and product flow. Once a map for improvements was made, Kaizen events were held to make improvements that were noted in the mapping events.

Results:

- * Saved 6,204 labor hours from time Lean manufacturing started until the end of the roll-out due to increased production time.
- * Produced cost savings of \$248,160.
- * Saved 6,204 employee production hours at rate of \$40 per hour.
- * Increased investment of \$10,000.
- * Created 5 new jobs.
- * Retained 3 jobs.
- * Reduced labor costs per unit.

Testimonial:

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"Southern's history has involved the use of several industrial designers trained at Auburn University. The custom nature of our designs and custom fabrication background of our workforce presented a strong challenge to implementing lean. The professional group of trainers from the Alabama Technology Network definitely met the challenge to teach our team members the new way of thinking about how to accomplish the work. We now have a very good team of core leaders who think lean and are ready to implement lean thanks to the Alabama Technology Network."

Gene Cary, President